

Tough budget decisions bring great opportunities, raise optimism

By Councilmember Rose Herrera
Special to the Times

Evergreen residents have a long history of coming together, celebrating our community, and getting through tough times with our heads held high and stronger for the experience. I am proud to say that tradition continues. As the City Council considers proposals to address the \$115 million budget shortfall, there are events, opportunities, and businesses that raise the level of optimism for our area.

On Monday, May 9, the Mayor joined me for the District 8 Community Budget meeting. More than 50 residents and employees listened to an informative presentation on the budget. A respectful atmosphere allowed for an exchange of ideas that gets us the shared desire for an economically strong, safe, livable city.

We heard strong support for preserving library hours, graffiti abatement, a need for volunteerism and controlling pension costs. These are the same priorities that we are hearing throughout San Jose. Although we are a city of almost one million people spread out over 180 square miles, we are all San Jose residents with many common issues.

The budget troubles of local governments traditionally lag behind the private sector and continue for a greater length of time. The City Manager is wisely seeking structural changes to how we do business to prevent this magnitude of budget problems from reoccurring.

The imbalance between the city's revenue

base and its cost structure has become more pronounced. The shortfall will be addressed through employee concessions, service cuts, and through changes in service delivery. We have 11 bargaining units and five have made concessions that include 10 percent ongoing total compensation reductions, in addition to other reforms. Without these reductions, the impacts would have been worse.

Most everyone agrees the major driver of our deficit is pension and benefits costs. The need for reform is gaining support amongst our employee groups. How to reform the current system is the challenge. Changes will require a charter change approved by the voters. I'm hopeful that a cooperative understanding will be reached amongst the employees and the city.

If you want to learn more about the budget hearings, updates on negotiations, and find budget reports, please go to my website: www.sanjoseca.gov/district8

As always, the Evergreen community inspires me. As I meet with the owners of New Leaf Market and Fresco World Market, two new grocery stores coming to our area, I am thrilled to hear about the positive response they are receiving. Let's keep the momentum going and support the local businesses that are taking the risks during

this time.

You can show your support for your favorite coffee shop, lunch spot, or family destination with a great review on Yelp, Google, Facebook, LikeList and DishCrawl. These small gestures do matter and will make a difference in strengthening our local economy.

Supporting our local businesses goes hand in hand with filling some of the service gaps that our budget deficit has created. We are providing opportunities to bring our community together. That is why I am hosting upcoming events with non-profit partners that celebrate all that is San Jose.

May is Jewish Heritage Month, a national month of recognition with more than 350 years of history of Jewish contributions to American culture. There will be a ceremony on Tuesday, May 17 from 12 - 1:15 p.m. at City Hall that will serve as an opportunity to highlight and recognize the Jewish American heritage that has helped shape our culture and continues to strengthen our country.

On Saturday, May 21 from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., I am sponsoring the third Annual Senior Health Fair and Walk at the Eastridge Mall. My thanks to co-sponsors Eastridge Mall, Breathe California, Regional Medical

Center of San Jose, Fresco World Market, PG&E, *El Observador*, and *The Epoch Times*.

This resource fair is a free event that reaches out to our senior community providing seniors with an opportunity to join their neighbors at a fun community-building event, while receiving beneficial information from organizations regarding health and services available in our city.

On Saturday, May 21, Involved Evergreen, an organization of residents that support Evergreen Village Square, are sponsoring the EPIC Festival from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. EPIC is a festival focused on earth, people, international, culture and a great family event for the entire Evergreen area.

On Friday, June 3 from 6 - 9 p.m., I am presenting the HBO documentary, "Warrior: 1861-2010" in the City Hall Council Chambers. This film and the panel discussion is brought to us by the South Bay Blue Star Moms and the Family Alliance for Veterans of America. It is important to know that this explores combat stress and post-traumatic stress in the military throughout American history, including an Evergreen veteran. Admission and parking is free. RSVP is required at sbsmtickets@yahoo.com or by calling (408) 235-9835.

As governments across the country feel the protracted effects of the Great Recession, communities are coming together. We are coming together in unique and inspiring ways that we have not seen in decades. I hope you will join me at these events and stay connected to our Evergreen community.



District 8 Report

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City Councilmember



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